GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:129
ANSWERED ON:25.07.2006
REPORT ON HIGHER EDUCATION
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Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether the National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA) has submitted its report to the Government on higher education; and

(b) if so, the recommendation made by the NIEPA alongwith the Government's reaction thereto?

Answer

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRI M.A.A. FATMI)

(a): Yes, Sir, the NIEPA has forwarded a report on a Seminar organized on the 2nd May, 2006 by the Institute on the theme of " Privatization and Commercialization of Higher Education".

(b): A summary of recommendations made at the Seminar is at Annexure-I. These recommendations are valuable inputs in formulating policies, as well as appropriate laws, in regard to preventing commercialization.

ANNEXURE-I

ANNEXURE REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO PART (B) OF THE LOK SABHA UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 129 DATED 25.7.2006 ASKED BY SHRI GURUDAS DASGUPTA AND SHRI C.K. CHANDRAPPAN REGARDING REPORT ON HIGHER EDUCATION.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
Recommendations

The executive summary of the recommendations of the National Seminar on Privatization and Commercialization of Higher Education held on May, 2, 2006, arising out of the background paper and the deliberations during the seminar, is presented below.

1. The objectives of higher education and basic research for any society, particularly one striving to grow into a knowledge society, are not only to address the knowledge needs of the present time, but also to project the knowledge needs of the future, as far as possible. In fact, a knowledge society needs creative minds in the sciences and the humanities that are not confined within narrow boundaries set by either the current market trends in the private sector or the policy commitments in the government sector, binding though they may be in the short run. It is the responsibility of the state to try to determine the futuristic vision with the help of identified groups of knowledge workers, and influence the course of development in pursuit of that vision with appropriate funding.

2. The State is primarily responsible for ensuring quality education at all levels and in all regions. This would entail strengthening of public institutions as also their quantitative expansion. It is evidently the obligation of the state to find ways and means of raising public resources for higher education as per the recommendations of (a) the CABE Committee Report on financing of Higher & Technical Education and (b) the Tapas Majumdar Committee Report on National Common Minimum Programme's Commitment of 6% GDP to Education.

3. The philanthropic tradition in Indian higher education has been always active and institutions sponsored by it therefore should be promoted. An incentive system in terms of tax concessions, land grants and transparent rules should be laid down so as to attract private participation in higher education. Industry may be encouraged to provide research grants relevant to appropriate technological change. Educational funds for various specific purposes may be floated by seeking contributions from likely private sources and the management of funds should be in the hands of academic/processional bodies. Some of the private higher education institutions with a proven track record of excellence should be identified and promoted.

4. During recent years, private initiative in higher education became almost unavoidable. At the same time, there was increasing pressure in favour of expansion. Since the courts permitted the institutions to charge students in full in certain cases, a large number of new institutions came to be opened. This in turn created a fresh set of problems and all of them have not been taken care of yet. This much is clear by now that the private sector of education has come into existence alongside the governmental sector. One of the problems that need to be taken care of is how the two should co-exist. Secondly, there is the problem of commercialization.

5. Commercialization is manifestating itself in a variety of forms such as the full recovery of the cost of higher education in government and government aided institutions; high fees in self-financing private processional colleges, deemed and private universities; high

fees charged in unrecognized private institutions offering foreign degrees in collaboration with foreign universities etc. Commercialization, therefore, needs to be unambiguously defined with a view to containing it.

6. Commercialization of higher education can have adverse implications, both in terms of access and equity. It may even create internal imbalances and distortions in higher education such as excessive importance to the IT − related sector at the cost of the Social Sciences and the Humanities. Commodification of education, research and knowledge will not serve the long range interests of the nation. It could lead to truncated growth and lop sided development of higher education. The applied aspects may acquire importance at the cost of other dimensions, thus neglecting vast pools of traditional knowledge acquired over the centuries. Therefore, commercialization needs to be controlled.

7. A system to regulate commercialization should be put in place by the Central and State governments in coordination with each other. If the Central government so desires, it may lay down constitutional provisions to regulate commercialization. A suitable framework in respect of specific issues can be imposed by legislation, if necessary, and its implementation may be ensured through various regulatory bodies.

8. Foreign universities are promoting the process of privatization and fuelling commercialization. Issues like regulation by the various professional bodies to control fees, fine tune quality and suitable legislation for the entry of foreign universities would have to be immediately attended to.

9. Private non-government institutions may be permitted to generate a fair surplus without indulging in unfair practices and the surplus so generated should be ploughed back for the upgradation of the institution. These institutions should be made to submit a copy of their quarterly accounts to their respective states for audit.

10. Distance education is yet another area where potential of commercialization are quite high because of diverse nature of suppliers offering variegated programmes with little control by the regulatory bodies. Today, the quality of distance education is both unsatisfactory and uneven. This is largely because it is not clear who controls what. Both the UGC and the IGNOU operate in different ways and sometimes at cross purposes with each other. The role of foreign universities also contributes to this phenomenon. It is a matter of urgency therefore that this confusion is removed and responsibilities are allocated in a rational and constructive manner.

11. There if an urgent need to evolve a proper coordination mechanism amongst the various regulatory bodies in order to determine issues such as fees, admission, procedures, the quality of education, future directions etc.

12. Periodic accreditation of all institutions of higher learning should be made mandatory for the purpose of ensuring quality. It is matter of utmost urgency that each new institution is accredited not later than one year of it being started. In case the relevant professional agencies are unable to meet this demand, these bodies may either be strengthened or some partner agencies with established credibility may be identified and entrusted with the responsibility of carrying out accreditation.

13. Whenever an institution is found in default of the norms laid down by the relevant controlling authority, the latter shall have the right to impose a financial penalty for each default. This should apply to all institutions, including those controlled by the government. The amount chargeable should be laid down in advance at the time of laying down the norms. If an institution more than twice commits the default, the institutions should be debarred from running the courses, as the case might be.